



Hoosier Scholars Helping Democracy

Indiana's College Student Poll Worker Program • Timothy M. Koponen, PhD, Director

History

Since the general election of 2004, the American Democracy Project at IUPUI has been recruiting students as poll workers. Starting with the successful recruitment of 125 students in Marion County in 2004, the program steadily grew. In 2006, Hoosier Scholars Helping Democracy was officially developed using grant funds from the Indiana Secretary of State, Todd Rokita's office. Recruitment numbers more than doubled between the 2006 primary and the general elections. The program also received a federal grant from the Election Assistance Commission. By receiving these funds, HSHD's successes were acknowledged at the federal level.



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Program Overview

Hoosier Scholars Helping Democracy (HSHD) is a partnership between the American Democracy Project (ADP) and the Indiana Campus Compact (ICC) with funding and support from the Indiana Secretary of State's office.

On Election Day, it takes more than 30,000 poll workers to run Indiana's 5,500 precincts. Recruiting volunteers is one of the biggest challenges of running an election, but college students could be the solution. *HSHD* was designed to meet that challenge. As election inspectors, judges and clerks, students would check names of voters on the poll list and turn in each precinct's vote to county authorities and depending on the county, get paid between \$70 and \$110.

Program Goals

The ultimate goal of *HSHD* is to recruit college students to work the polls on Election Day. In order to achieve this goal, *HSHD* relies on partnerships with both the political parties and colleges and universities. We need colleges to do their part in getting the information out to the students to promote *HSHD* at orientation and other early September events, assist in finding reliable campus representatives to recruit students, organize informational meetings and pre-training sessions and agree to provide an excused absence for students working the polls. Also, we need the political parties and the county election administrators to do their part to place students at polling sites on Election Day.

Program Benefits

The experience of *HSHD* is not only beneficial to the state of Indiana but also to the student participants. They receive extra spending money for their service and gain valuable experience in political and government processes. Also, students have found internships and full time work after having made contact with the program, and many have gone on to work in local political campaigns, strengthening our democracy in more ways than just working the polls.

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I love being a poll worker! It requires commitment and focus on the part of the volunteer, but at the end of the day I am always filled with a great sense of pride.

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- Monica Cline, *HSHD* participant